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## THE SAVAGE AT THE QUARTET.

It has been written of Poetry, as most people are aware, that when only commonplace or ordinary, it is not to be tolerated by gods or men, or publishing establishments; though, as for these last, if Horace had lived in our times, he would scarcely have thought it necessary to mention them, for even good poets do not now a days find favour in their eyes. It has also been said by a great wit concerning Painting, that the worst sort of ochre that can be used in that profession is the Mediocre. But why has nothing been remarked of an equally caustic character respecting the sister Art of Music? Why is every young lady taught to strum on the pianoforte, as though the possession of ten fingers were sufficient for excellence in that accomplishment, notwithstanding the lack of an ear for music? Why do musical folks tremble to go out to dinner, for fear they should be doomed to suffer for it afterwards in the drawing-room of their entertainer at the hands of a young-lady amateur? She is led up, after a conventional resistance which affords no hope, since they are well aware how it will all end, to the piano, like Iphigenia to the sacrifice, only, instead of her suddenly turning into a goat (which would be an unspeakable relief), the sacrifice is fully completed—that is, of the audience. Conversation is made to cease until this inexperienced performer has struggled through some piece totally beyond her powers, and then it is ten to one if some injudicious or malignant person does not remark in that hypocritical tone peculiar to such a request: ‘Oh, thank you, Miss Blundertips; we trust you are not going to limit us to one’— And before the man can finish his sentence, she has removed the glove which she had only made a pretence of resuming, and begins again with something worse.

Mr Dickens has been accused of making crude young ladies in some of his novels wield an influence over the rest of his *dramatis personæ*, which it is urged they are not seen to do in real life; but certainly at the pianoforte they are paramount, and all must alike submit to their harmonious (?)

rule. Honest folks who intend to inflict this punishment upon their guests, should acquaint them with the fact when they send their invitations, at the same time enclosing their bill of fare; then persons of taste might strike a balance between the threat and the promise—the infliction and the treat—and decide to accept or refuse accordingly.

It is very unselfish and disinterested in the present writer to suggest this course, for it so happens that he has no ear whatever. Of course, I possess a pair of those singular excrescences, which, although they have been likened to very many pretty things, are certainly held in admiration in inverse proportion to their size; but for musical purposes, I might almost as well be without them. I know a B flat when I see it, but not when I hear it. A whole advertisement column of the *Times* is devoted daily to matters about which I know no more than a native of the Andaman Islands; and, indeed, the last named is much given, I understand, to playing upon the ‘tom-tom,’ and has so far clearly the advantage of me, for I don’t know what the tom-tom is, unless it is a chorus of cats.

What kind of people they are who attend Signor Screechi’s *Après-midi Musicales*, I cannot even guess at; nor when they don’t go, but stay at home for ‘chamber music,’ have I any idea what that means, unless it is the only too common domestic fracas popularly known as ‘hammer and tongs.’ What is a *Matinée Musicale d’Invitation*, and in what does it differ from a simple *matinée*? They sound to me like musical *entrées*, the one with, and the other without the *sauce piquante*. The advertisement of the New Philharmonic Concerts always attracts me very much, no less from its magnificence of diction than from its profound obscurity. The repetition of the word ‘fugue,’ for example, affords one an agreeable entertainment analogous to that of investigating ciphers—nay, the pursuit is even still more exciting, since, besides the mystery of its meaning, there is the doubt as to its pronunciation also. The frequent appearance of the expression ‘Bach’ is also very embarrassing,

but I suppose refers to the repetition of the same strain again and again, which is to me so especially abhorrent, both in music and singing—like volunteering an 'encore' which none of the audience has demanded. To-morrow, I perceive, there is this treat awaiting me, if I only choose to take advantage of it. 'The Choral Symphony of Beethoven, the ninth and last which he composed, stands Op. 125 in the catalogue of his works, and was written when the third and last epoch of his style had attained its full maturity.' Now, do musical people talk to *one another* in this gorgeously ridiculous style? Because if they do, the art-critic in painting, who have long enjoyed the reputation of wrapping up the least possible sense in the greatest possible amount of words, have no right to such pre-eminence, but should give way at once to the disciples of music. Compared with either of these classes, I am proud to say that the art-critic in Literature (though misty enough, I grant) assumes the position of a reasonable being.

But let us still further examine this Wonder: Beethoven had long cherished the idea [Fancy!] of giving a musical expression to Schiller's *Ode to Joy*—a poem which, in glowing and harmonious numbers, apostrophises Hope and Faith, inculcates a belief in the Good, preaches the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, and glorifies the beauties of Nature.\* Such a poem was just the one to impress Beethoven, and it enjoyed his entire admiration; but whatever may be said of its merits, its greatest triumph was that of having originated one of the finest inspirations of the human mind.\* If musical folks put these sort of things in their advertisements, what do they put in their works themselves? For the small sum of one shilling I can go to-night and listen, it seems, 'to one of the finest inspirations of the human mind,' and yet, I know I should come away no better than I went, and probably with a headache. I should not be aware where this extraordinary performance commenced, nor where it ended, nor when it was going on, although I think if they ventured upon Bach (as they insist upon spelling it), I should find that out, and publicly object to a second infliction. The audience would, in fact, possess an extra sense in which my inferior organisation is totally deficient.

This is really very strange; and I quite admit that it is I who am to be pitied. But a musical friend of mind has lately ventured to go much further than that, and to term me (habitually) 'the Savage.' Now this, I thought, was hard, inasmuch as I have always acknowledged my imperfection, and put it out of my power to insult a musical performance through want of appreciation, by the simple expedient of never attending one. Instead of being touched, however, by this humility of mind, my friend Fidelle (as I will call him, for he is faithful, and also plays the violin) was enraged at it: he informed me that as no order of human intelligence was so low that it could not be elevated, so no ears were so dull but that the divine mystery of music might be made to steal into them sooner or later; it was as much my duty, he said, to cultivate this art, in which I was so far behind, as for a mute to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by a deaf and dumb asylum; nay, he addressed me from even a loftier elevation, as

though I were a benighted heathen, and besought me to let him be the Missionary who should introduce me to the Great Harmonies of Art. As the offer comprehended an invitation to dinner, or other festive entertainment, upon every occasion when I was to be thus instructed, I permitted myself, without much reluctance, to be persuaded. I accompanied my Mentor to the 'Monday Popular Concerts,' not the least singular peculiarity of which is, that they sometimes take place on Saturday afternoons: I heard Herr Joachim 'lead' in Mozart's quintet in C minor, 'the first movement of which is' (I was informed) 'its author's *capo d'opera* in chamber music'; an assertion I am not prepared to dispute. Then followed a *chaconne*, 'executed' said a critic on my left, whose head seemed mechanically contrived for keeping time, 'with genial humour,' although I confess I did not see the joke. Finally, there was an *adagio*, that I was given to understand was 'one of the grandest and most pathetic slow movements in existence,' but which was succeeded by another one even slower, and executed by the entire strength of the audience—ebbing out of St James's Hall. It was an example, I could not help remarking, of the *moto continuo PRESTISSIMO*, which I should not forget in a hurry.

This observation, as savouring somewhat of flippancy, and a mistake which I fell into regarding the name of one of the performers, which, notwithstanding his world-wide reputation, I had never so much as heard of before, combined to irritate my preceptor.

'If you call Piatti *Pianetti* again,' said Fidelle with severity, 'you shall have no oysters for supper;' and he made me carry home a half-yearly volume of the *Tonic Sol Fa Reporter*, by way of imposition. That is a very pleasant and interesting magazine, I have no doubt, to those who can understand it; but it is a little obscure and technical. From what I could gather, it seems to set before its readers, as the object most to be aspired after by the human mind, the position of a 'Certified Solfait.' If it does not involve any surgical operation, I should like to be that myself; but I have my apprehensions.

My education went on without much visible good result, but my tutor was hopeful still. I never, it is true, evinced any unseemly prejudice in favour of one piece of music over another; but where any very broad difference existed between particular tones (if one had the cymbals, for instance, and the other hadn't), I was able to detect it. Whenever I heard the drum, too, I rarely failed to cry out: 'That's a march,' which pleased Fidelle very much, and particularly when I happened to be right. Moreover, under the influence of melody, I very often went to sleep, which he said was a good sign. It shewed that there was at least no active antagonism to music in my unfortunate constitution. This favourable symptom in my case turned out, however, to be the ruin of my musical prospects as well as (almost) those of my preceptor himself. Fidelle, I should have told you, is a member of that select and fashionable musical society which goes by the name of the *Wandering Minstrels*, a sort of glorified *Ethiopian Serenaders*, without, however, the charming 'Bones,' whom I humbly consider to be at the very summit of the musical profession, and to be far the best worth hearing of any instrumental performer within my now considerable

\* All this is clearly a trespass upon the domain of the art-critic of literature.

experience. Also, they make the very great mistake of not blacking their hands and faces. However, they are an aristocratic institution, and my Fidelle (who has the instincts of an Englishman, I hope) cleaves to them fondly; drives miles and miles to take his part in their performances; and willingly accompanies them when they make those tours of charity in the provinces which do them so much credit. All honour to the ophicleide which can raise the wind for the Widow and the Fatherless; blest be the catgut that scrapes sovereigns—with gentle violence—out of the pockets of rich men to feed the poor!

When my friend and patron observed one morning: 'I tell you what, Man Friday' [because I was a Savage, you see], 'I'll take you to the *Wandering Minstrels* this very evening,' I knew that I ought to feel obliged. 'It's a "smoking concert" to-night,' he continued, 'so that you need not be deprived of that cigar, after which I know you pine even in the very opera-house itself; and there is as much gin and water given to you as you choose to drink. Moreover, there are beautiful books in the room with pictures in them; but for all that, I expect you to listen to the quartet in E flat, which (although I say it who shouldn't say it, since I play the first fiddle) will be well worthy of the attention of—everybody, in short, above the level of the beasts. It is the only one in which I appear this evening, so you will know when it takes place for certain.'

The Minstrels, though Wandering, have, as everybody knows, a local habitation; a plain but admirably-built concert-hall, the body of which is well filled, on the occasions when smoking is permitted, by gentlemen-guests, some of whom the combined charms of music and tobacco allure for the whole evening, and by others who 'drop in,' after having favoured other entertainments with their presence. On little tables along the walls are arranged bottles of that purest spirit, at the presence of which I have already hinted, and there is plenty of water to mix with it. On standing desks, too, are placed handsome books and portfolios, full of engravings and etchings, to suit the tastes of those who are not wholly given up to music.

Fidelle having introduced me into this elysium, took his own place in the populous orchestra, leaving me in the good care of a habitué of the misty scene. This gentleman was full of anecdotes, and had an enviable power of relating them, without appearing to lookers-on to be so much as moving his lips; in fact, I believe people thought it was I who kept up that low but unbroken murmur which permeated the rich torrent of orchestral sound throughout the evening, a suspicion that was only too intensified by what finally occurred.

My neighbour, however, if not exactly cut out for a listener, was very agreeable to me, and seemed to think me quite a character for preferring the drum (next to 'the Bones') above all other musical instruments. I like to see it banged with that mushroom-headed stick, and then the hand applied to the wounded part, as though it were a sentient being, who demanded the promptest reparation; but why people who play the drum should have such dirty hands, the proof of which may be read on the parchment, is altogether beyond my comprehension.

'I should think you were the sort of man who likes the ophicleide,' observed this gentleman

insinuatingly. 'It has so fine a volume of sound, as well as such a very imposing personal appearance. Where it is bad, however, it rather disconcerts the other performers. I remember, in one of the Western States of America, a very respectable theatre which was rendered intolerable to musical folks by a self-willed and tyrannical ophicleide. He had a part-share in the house itself, and therefore could not be turned out of the orchestra; but it was the wish of all who heard him that the breath was finally out of his body, and that he had blown his last. Upon one occasion, a dreadful disturbance broke out in the gallery, and a gentleman, who had given offence to his companions, was about to be precipitated by them, in his shirt-sleeves, into the pit, when suddenly a commanding voice was heard: "Stop, stop: don't waste him, my good friends; but drop him on the ophicleide." And they did it.'

Here more than one indignant cry of 'Silence, silence!' misdirected to poor me (who was merely laughing), compelled me to remove myself from the dangerous vicinity of this *raconteur*, and to transfer my attention to a portfolio of engravings. I felt that, standing up, it would be almost impossible for me to go to sleep, an exposition of which I found, as usual, stealing upon me under the harmonious influence of catgut; while even now I saw by Fidelle's face that the quartet in E flat was about to begin, to which he had so especially directed my attention. It did begin forthwith; with such an 'exquisite movement'—uncommonly like the fluttering of a bird—that I did not venture to interrupt it by turning over the immense pages before me, but remained, like one spell-bound, staring hard at a particularly uninteresting picture of Milan Cathedral; architecture, says somebody, is 'frozen music,' and to one who does not care for music, even when unfrozen, it is not an attraction. My mind wandered from it and the quartet to other scenes: it revisited the haunts of my boyhood, and recalled those days when I used to execute *fantasias* myself with a bit of brown paper and a small-tooth comb. A terrible apprehension that I was falling asleep overshadowed me dimly, and yet I had no power to rouse myself; I thought it was Christmas Day, and that I was home for the holidays, and in the family pew at afternoon service, after eating to repletion of roast-beef and Yorkshire pudding; I heard my uncle the clergyman 'droning, droning' like a black bumble-bee, and I knew that I, his nephew, would presently fall off my seat, and carry the family Bible with me, the position of which upon the slanting desk without a ledge, was always a great source of anxiety. With a great effort, I opened my eyes, and recognised the whole position; beheld Fidelle working away at his violin as though his life depended upon it; clearly remembered that the quartet—no, the *quarto*; was it a book or only a portfolio? (Here my eyelids slowly closed.) What a curious expression was that employed by the Pandects of Aristophanes, 'a minister without a port'— I suppose I had put my hands out to assure myself that the thing was there, but all of a sudden, there was a most hideous crash. Something fell upon me—it seemed like the roof of the building—which struck a thousand sparks out of my eyes. . . . I knew that it would be best to shut my eyes and pretend to be dead, until they got me home; I did not dare meet the gaze of my injured Fidelle.

As a matter of fact, however, I had suffered very little harm. On the other hand, I had pulled down a range of standing desks with their giant burdens; broke thirteen bottles of gin; and made such a termination to the quartet in E flat (Op. 44) as Mendelssohn never imagined in a nightmare.

#### W A T E R-S P O U T S.

FERDINAND COLON, the son of Christopher Columbus, reports that among other terrors which assailed the ships in a gale off the Zorobaro Islands, 'which are near the confines of Nueva Carthago and the province of Veraguas,' there was a water-spout so dangerous, that if it had not been dispersed by saying the gospel of St John, they had certainly been sunk.

This recourse to the gospel of St John seems to imply a belief in Colon that water-spouts were an invention of the devil. It is not strange that he should have thought so; for though it must be supposed that he had seen or heard of these meteors in European waters, yet he probably had not seen them of so great size, or under the peculiarly trying circumstances in which this one appeared to him. The sight, the whir, the danger with which its presence was fraught to the ships, were calculated to strike terror into the hearts even of brave men, unaccustomed to navigate these seas, and not as yet quite sure they were not guilty of impiety by thrusting themselves into a region of the world which had hitherto been hidden from the sight of Europe. Even now, ignorant people who know not what water-spouts are, and know not how to avoid the peril, get frightened at the enemy risen from the deep which threatens to overwhelm them.

The term 'water-spout' is a misnomer if it be intended to describe the phenomenon as something which has a distinctive origin. It is correct only if it be intended to describe the effect which a cause operating equally on land as at sea produces, when the object upon which it happens to work is water. A more accurate title would be air-spout, for this which so forcibly impressed Ferdinand Colon, and was dispersed by means so singular, was nothing else than a revolving column of air—a small whirlwind—of the same family with those meteors seen in deserts, and known as sand-spouts, and which in India are called, *par excellence*, 'devils.' Water-spouts, sand-spouts, 'devils,' are but specific names by which different members of the class 'whirlwind' are known. They have a common origin, but display themselves in distinctly different ways. They are not under the same law as the greatest of whirlwinds, the cyclones and the hurricanes, for they do not always revolve in the same direction, but they partake of their character so far as to exhibit the same inclination to travel with the wind at the wind's velocity, and over a very much smaller space to work with equal fury, shewing in the rapidity of their own internal gyrations, and in the damage they inflict, that 'though they be but little, they are fierce.'

The eddies which are frequently seen whirling round leaves or dust gathered from the roads in this country, are akin to those which draw up water, though it is suggested that in these the elevation of the leaves and dust is due to an operation purely mechanical; whereas in the larger manifestation of the same influence, the friction caused by the rubbing together of many particles of air in rapid revolution evolves an electrical

power which lends its aid to heighten the effect of the cause which has set it in motion.

It was largely maintained at one time, that electricity was solely responsible for water-spouts; and an experiment which is easily tried, gave countenance, if it did not give rise to the supposition. Dr Bonzano of New Orleans gives the directions for the experiment. They, and his remarks upon the experiment, are as follow: 'From the conductor of an electrical machine, suspend by a wire or chain a small metallic ball—one of wood covered with tinfoil—and under the ball place a rather wide metallic basin, containing some oil of turpentine, at the distance of about three-quarters of an inch. If the handle of the machine be now turned slowly, the liquid in the basin will begin to move in different directions, and form whirlpools. As the electricity on the conductor accumulates, the troubled liquid will elevate itself in the centre, and at last become attached to the ball. Draw off the electricity from the conductor to let the liquid resume its position: a portion of the turpentine. Turn the handle again very slowly, and observe now the few drops adhering to the ball assume a conical shape, with the apex downward, while the liquid under it assumes also a conical shape, the apex upward, until both meet. As the liquid does not accumulate on the ball, there must necessarily be as great a current downward as upward, giving the column of liquid a rapid circular motion, which continues until the electricity from the conductor is nearly all discharged silently, or until it is discharged by a spark descending into the liquid. The same phenomena take place with oil or water. Using the latter liquid, the ball must be brought much nearer, or a much greater quantity of electricity is necessary to raise it.'

'If in this experiment we let the ball swing to and fro, the little water-spout will travel over its miniature sea, carrying its whirlpools along with it. When it breaks up, a portion of the liquid, and with it anything it may contain, remains attached to the ball. The fish, seeds, leaves, &c. that have fallen to the earth in rain-squalls, may have owed their elevation to the clouds to the same cause that attaches a few drops of the liquid, with its particles of impurities, to the ball.'

But while it is undoubtedly true that the electrical condition of the air is disturbed by the tremendous mechanical action which is set up, so that it even vents itself in the shape of 'balls of fire,' 'flashes of light,' &c., which have been observed to accompany water-spouts; and while it is quite possible that some of the effect produced may be ascribed to electricity acting upon the objects drawn up, in the same fashion that the electricity in the experiment acts upon the water in the cup; it is now generally believed that the electrical display is rather accidental than otherwise, an incident growing out of a cause independent of it—certainly not the *primum mobile* which may be said to cause the water-spout. The cause of that is one with the cause which in a smaller sphere produces the leaf-whirling eddy, and which is a mechanical, not an electrical one.

The following account of a water-spout—*e uno disce omnes*—seen by Captain Beechey, R.N., off Clermont-Tonnerre, one of the islands in the Dangerous Archipelago, latitude nineteen degrees south, longitude one hundred and thirty-seven degrees west, is taken from Sir William Reid's *Law of Storms*:

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While we were off Clermont-Tonnerre, we had a narrow escape from a water-spool of more than ordinary size. It approached us amidst heavy rain, thunder, and lightning, and was not seen until it was very near to the ship. As soon as we were within its influence, a gust of wind obliged us to take in every sail; and the topsails, which could not be furled in time, were in danger of splitting. The wind blew with great violence, momentarily changing its direction, as if it were sweeping round in short spirals: the rain, which fell in torrents, was also precipitated in curves, with short intervals of cessation. Amidst this thick shower, the water-spool was discovered, extending in a tapering form, from a dense stratum of cloud to within thirty feet of the water, where it was hid by the foam of the sea being whirled upwards by a tremendous gyration. It changed its direction after it was first seen, and threatened to pass over the ship; but being diverted from its course by a heavy gust of wind, it gradually receded. On the dispersion of this magnificent phenomenon, we observed the column to diminish gradually, and at length to retire to the cloud from whence it had descended, in an undulating form.

On the present occasion, a ball of fire was observed to be precipitated into the sea, and one of the boats, which was away from the ship, was so surrounded by lightning, that Lieutenant Belcher thought it advisable to get rid of the anchor by hanging it some fathoms under water, and to cover the seamen's muskets.

Many times, water-spoouts come and go without any of the violent accompaniments above described; indeed, they are often seen on calmest days and in lovely weather, when there is no indication of anything like a storm. But Captain Beechey's account is true of some; and, divested of its stormy features, is substantially correct of all water-spoouts. Such being a description, what is the cause of them?

Now, it seems that, by reason of the equal distribution of the atmosphere about the surface of the earth, no violent movement in it can take place except by means of a vortex or whirlwind; and to the continuance of any vortex in action, it is necessary that there should be an external propelling force, and a constant spiral discharge from that extremity of its axis towards which is the tendency of motion. In the case of the water-spool, these conditions are fulfilled. A whirlwind is caused by an operation which will be mentioned presently. There is an external propelling force in the pressure of the surrounding atmosphere upon all sides of the whirling column; and the constant spiral discharge towards the upper extremity is witnessed by the suction drawing up from below, by which the sea-spray is hurled into the broad area of the whirl, to be flung down again in the shape of briny rain.

The cause of the vortex, which is the first thing needful for the existence of a water-spool, is to be found in the conflict which goes on between two strata of air—one warm, lying on the surface of the earth, and the other cold, lying in the layer above it. They could not mingle if theirs was merely the case of a stratum of cold wind just overlying a stratum of warm air; if the line of stratification were clearly and evenly marked, there would not be anything to suggest a mingling of the two. But if any inequality existed in the top and bottom of the two strata respectively, if an entrance

were given to the cold air, so that it could disturb the repose of its under-lie, then there would be that beginning of a winding in and out of particles of air, which the weight of the surrounding atmosphere and the tendency of the particles themselves would combine to make a circular motion. The external pressure alone would not produce rotation, but the upward movement of the warm air into the region of the cold wind having commenced, in, as it would be, a spiral form, the particles near the exterior of the column yield at a little more than a right angle, to the external pressure, in their spirally approximating course towards the rarefied centre; so that the circular form first taken by the spout, yield as it may to onward velocity of the wind prevailing at the time, and liable as it is to sway about, or writhe under the pressure put upon it, is retained until its decease—for the external pressure having fitted in, as it were, to the outsides of the whirl, will not suffer it to change its shape, though it may force it to change its course. Here, then, is the vortex, revolving at a rate on its inmost round of sometimes ninety miles an hour.

The spiral discharge, which is also an essential of a water-spool, is thus accounted for. The air at the upper extremity of the whirling column, owing to its elevation, is rarer than that at the base; and the column itself, especially in its central portions, is mechanically rarefied by the centrifugal effect of its own whirling motion; so that there is a sort of rarefied chimney into which the denser air at the base of the column is continually forced by the pressure of the surrounding atmosphere; not to ascend in a separate current, and be discharged at the top, as in a chimney, but entering into the organisation of the vortex to supply the place of air gone before, which, winding inwards and upwards, has been discharged from the upper extremity; just in the same way that the topmost whirl of a revolving eddy in water, having passed through each section of the eddy, beginning at the smallest, merges again in the surrounding water when the force which set it in motion has spent itself, or rather when it has got beyond the influence of that force. So, also, of the breaking-off of smoke-wreaths from the top, as is seen in that peculiar wreath of smoke, apparent when a gun has been greased at the muzzle, and known as the 'gunner's ring,' or in the curl which ascends from the bowl of a tobacco-pipe when the breath of the smoker is sent down the stem.

It is through the action of this vortex that the sea-water is forced up with a force that at times is truly terrific, and flung down again in huge gouts, like those which fly through the air during a hurricane at sea, and which are nothing but the tops of the waves cut off, whirled about in the air, and violently restored to the place whence they came. It is a common notion that water-spoouts are among the agencies by which a supply of water is obtained for the clouds to throw down again in the shape of rain; that the water taken out of the sea by them is kept up in the clouds till it can be kept no longer, and is then precipitated as rain.

But this notion is erroneous; for not only, if it were true, would rain-water be salt, there being no suggestion that the salt is got rid of in any way, but it becomes necessary to suppose that the water, carried up through a medium of warm air by sheer force, finds a *locus standi* in a medium colder than the one below; so cold, indeed, that it condenses

the particles of moisture which are floating about in the heated atmosphere, and throws them down in the form of rain. Rain cannot exist in the clouds otherwise than in a vapourised state, and when it is precipitated, the fall is due to the action of the condensing higher stratum upon the floating moisture held in suspension by the lower one. The sea-water in a water-spout is taken up bodily, without changing its character. Whether in the form of spray or of compact water, it is still the same, and in both these shapes it is taken up into the clouds, whence it is once more flung down to rejoin its companion waters, but in a sluicing deluge, lifted up, and then suffered to fall—never in the shape either of dew or rain. So long as the whirling column of air comes low enough to bear upon the surface of the water, so long will water continue to be sucked in and drawn up; but when, having passed through the different sections of the mighty revolving tube, the water reaches the top, and passes beyond the whirlwind's influence—or when the impulses which set the column in motion have ceased to operate, then the water rapt from below, with whatever it may hold, falls to its former place through the force of gravitation. It is of course quite possible that the winds, which are known to carry up dust, seeds, and other light matters to a great height, and then to transport them to great distances—as the wind which received the mass of ashes thrown up by the Souffrière of St Vincent in 1812, and carried it over and contrary to the trade-wind, to Barbadoes, seventy-five miles off—and the wind which carries dust away from the valley of the Amazon, many hundreds of miles, to deposit it at the Cape de Verds, and even on the southern shores of Europe—it is quite possible that such winds could hold in confinement a body of water for some considerable time. But to do so, they must be blowing far and continuously at such a rate as to overcome the tendency downwards of the water, which has a specific gravity so much greater than either the wind or the light articles just mentioned as being borne by it. As soon as any counter-current of air should be met, a wind-conflict of any sort be commenced, or from any cause the suspending power of the wind be withdrawn, down would come the imprisoned water in one mighty splash, and, of course, as salt-water, not as fresh-water rain.

It has been found that, at different times and places which have been noted when practicable, showers of fishes, crabs, dwellers in the ocean of some kind or other, have fallen. Such unusual occurrences are only to be explained through the agency of water-spouts, which have sucked the creatures up, perhaps from a great depth—for it is not known how far below the surface the ocean is affected by the whirlwind—and carried them off with the water in which they swam. Sometimes the fish have been very numerous, at other times few; and in one case a single fish fell on board the *Princess Charlotte*, in Toulon harbour, just after she had been struck by a water-spout, and thoroughly drenched.

In India, these falls of fishes are by no means rare. The list of authenticated cases is a large one, and some curious facts are recorded. In America, small eels two and a half inches long have been found, which fell from the clouds; and Humboldt reports the fall of many fish in the southern part of that continent, although, for special reasons, he attributes their upheaval to volcanic causes.

There are several well-attested cases recorded as having happened in England, one in 1666, when 'about a bushel' of small whittings, sprats, and smelts, the size of a man's little-finger, fell into a field near which there were not any fishponds, during the course of a violent storm. In 1833, at Lake Gwynant, in the county of Caernarvon, 'a servant woman was engaged in washing a pail at the edge of the lake, and a number of children were with her. While she was thus employed (the time was about eight o'clock in the evening), she was astonished by a shower of small fishes, which fell upon her and about her, partly into the lake and partly upon the land. They resembled herrings, but were much smaller. The children picked many of them up, and threw them into the lake. A heavy shower of rain had preceded the descent of these fishes, and the day following them was much thunder, and very much rain indeed.'

The size of the fish varies very much in the different accounts. In some cases, they are reported to be 'about the size of small gudgeon'; 'a little longer than a man's hand'; 'of the size of a man's little-finger'; and in one case it is said that fish a cubit in length, and weighing three pounds, fell from the clouds. In some instances, they were alive, in others, putrid and headless.

Besides these phenomena, there are to be mentioned, in connection with whirlwinds, the sand-spouts which are so much dreaded by travellers who are exposed to them. These proceed from the same causes as the water-spouts, and merely exhibit the different effect of a like whirl acting upon a different substance. Bruce saw them in Nubia—on one occasion eleven of them all at once. He speaks of them as 'pillars of sand at different distances, at times moving with great celerity, at others stalking on with a majestic slowness. . . . The tops often separated from the bodies; and these once disjoined, dispersed in the air, and did not appear more. Sometimes they were broken near the middle, as if struck with a large cannon-shot.' Bruce says they were 'one of the most magnificent sights in the world.'

The whirlwinds which, under certain circumstances, produce the results above mentioned, are not unfrequently seen far above the surface of the water, to which perhaps they never attain. They are distinguishable from the adjacent clouds by their peculiar funnel-shape, terminating downwards in a wavy stem. They are darker or lighter in colour according to the amount of moisture they contain, and to the degree of hostility to which the warm stratum has been roused against its overlying enemy of a colder temperature. If the action between these two be very great, there will be that dark convoluted appearance so commonly seen in the thunder-storm, both in the whirlwind and the adjacent clouds. It has been known that a ship becalmed, lying with her sails all loose and flapping, has been suddenly approached by one of these whirling air-spouts, which has left her *in statu quo* as regarded her deck, but twisted off and carried away some of the upper gear. It had not descended low enough to get to work on the water, though the violence with which the fag-end of the stem acted upon the rigging shewed what would have been the result of contact with the sea.

It was at one time thought that water-spouts partook of the nature of hurricanes, or, at all events, obeyed the same laws of gyration and progress. It is now clearly shewn that, as they have different

causes, so are they under different orders of revolution. In the northern hemisphere, a revolving storm whirls in a direction contrary to that in which the hands of a clock move; in the southern hemisphere, the rotation coincides with the movement of the hands. Now, in the case reported by Captain Beechey, off Clermont-Tonnerre, that is to say, in the nineteenth degree of south latitude, the gyrations of the water-spout were in a direction *contrary* to the hands of a watch. There were special circumstances which caused Captain Beechey to observe the direction in which the column revolved; and he found that it was not in accordance with the law which regulates hurricanes in the southern hemisphere. Other observations made, both north and south of the equator, go to prove that the circular movement of water-spouts is very irregular—sometimes going in one direction, sometimes in the opposite one, in the same hemisphere. So far as regards the onward progress of them, that is regulated by the same force which controls the cyclones. Both alike advance before the wind in whatever direction that may be blowing. But except that, in one sense, the origin of the two phenomena may be identified, seeing that both are due to a disturbance in the equilibrium of the air, through the hostile influences of warm and cold currents, cyclones and water-spouts have nothing in common.

Don Ferdinand Colon says that the water-spout he encountered was dispersed by their repeating the gospel of St John; and we are prone, perhaps, to smile at him therefor. But while we know more than he knew about the nature of these things, and are, through experience and much inquiry, enabled to avoid them, if we cannot disperse them, we should remember that he had warrant for his method in the stilling of the storm on the sea of Galilee; and that with all our knowledge—such as it is—we are as much dependent for our safety, in the presence of these and all other perils of the sea, as he was for his, on the merciful and faith-loving Lord, who commanded even the winds and sea, and they obeyed Him.

### MIRK ABBEY.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE PARTIE QUARRE.

As Walter had predicted, my Lady did not return to Mirk by the evening train, and scarcely under any circumstances could her absence have been more keenly felt. The four young folks at home were by no means so socially comfortable as a partie quarré is proverbially said to be. They felt themselves embarrassed even when all together; but when the couples were left alone, the gentlemen over the dessert, and the ladies in the drawing-room, their position was tenfold more awkward. If they had not been so nearly connected, the one might have taken refuge in conversation about the weather or politics, and the other in books or bonnet-shapes; but one of the many disadvantages of near relationship is, that you are cut off from all havens of that sort. The device is too transparent to be adopted or acquiesced in—each was conscious that the other was thinking of all sorts of unpleasant things, and wishing his companion at Jericho—or York at least. The temperature was so mild that there was not even a fire to poke.

‘You remember this claret, Walter, I dare say.’  
‘Yes; did not our father reckon it the next best in his cellar to that of the Comet year?’ &c. &c.

But it struck them both that an absence of a few days from the Abbey was not likely to produce forgetfulness upon this particular point more than upon any other. Sir Richard did not venture to propose a cigar in the smoking-room; they sat on either side of the empty grate making a great pretence of enjoying their wine (which might have been ginger-beer, for any gratification it afforded them) and racking their brains for something to say. At last Walter blurted out with a great show of frankness: ‘Richard, you were quite right about that fellow Derrick; I wish I had taken your view of the man; he has let me in for a good deal of money this Derby.’

‘I am sorry for that,’ returned the other, with genuine pleasure. ‘Yes, I knew he was a bad lot. I hope, however, he has now left Mirk for good and all.’

‘No; he’ll come back after Mary Forest, I have no doubt; and I am afraid I was partly to blame in helping him in that quarter. But he knows what I think of him now.’

‘I am glad of it,’ said the baronet drily.

‘Nice, conciliating, agreeable companion this is,’ soliloquised Walter: ‘I think I see myself making any second admission of having been wrong where he was right.’ His self-humiliation, however, had not been altogether without an object.

‘Yes; I lost a considerable sum—that is, considerable for me—through this gentleman from Cariboo,’ continued the captain. ‘It is all in train for being settled—I am not going to ask you, Richard, for another shilling. I am sure you have been already extremely generous—very much so. But the money can’t be paid for a few months; and there is one rascal—an infernal Jew fellow—who, instead of replying to my letter, offering him very handsome terms, I am sure, has had the impertinence, I see, to write to mamma.’

‘A Jew fellow write to my mother!’ exclaimed Sir Richard, with an indignant emphasis upon the personal pronoun.

‘I am afraid so. I am almost sure I recognise his horrid handwriting upon this envelope.’

He took down one of several letters upon the mantel-piece that had arrived that morning for the mistress of the house, and were awaiting her return.

‘You see he knows I’m under age, and he thinks to frighten one’s people into immediate payment by threatening all sorts of things which he cannot really put into effect, but which will alarm mamma very much indeed. It’s a common trick.’

‘Oh, indeed; I am not acquainted with the ways of such people myself. And what is it you propose to do, Walter?’

‘Well, I don’t think my mother should see that letter at all. He is not a sort of person—the beggar, you see, spells “Abbey” without an e—for a lady to have anything to do with.’

‘Nor a gentleman either, as I should think,’ observed the baronet severely. ‘But I do not perceive how we can prevent this mischief. You cannot open the letter, nor destroy it, of course.’

‘No, of course not,’ assented Walter, though with the air of a person who had only been very recently convinced of the impossibility.

Sir Richard took the objectionable missive

between his finger and thumb. *To the Honorable Lady Lisgard, Mirk Abby, Dalwynch.*

What a deal of trouble this fellow Walter was causing! Of course, one did not wish one's brother any harm, but what a nice thing it would be if one could get him some appointment in the Colonies. New Zealand was said to be very salubrious, and had an excellently conducted church establishment: the last mail, too, had brought home (for the eleventh time) the joyful news that the Maories were finally subjugated.

'A perfect savage,' observed Walter, with reference to Mr Moss Welcher Abrahams.

'And yet with some good points,' argued the baronet, his thoughts still lingering in the antipodes.

'I'm hanged if I ever heard of them, then,' replied his brother with irritation. 'He's a black-leg and a usurer. I'd never have bet with such an infernal scoundrel, only that he offered me half a point more than the odds.'

'Ah,' returned Sir Richard, with all the expressiveness that is attributed to the 'Ugh' of the North American Indian. 'Suppose we join the ladies.'

I do not pretend to narrate how Rose and Letty had passed their time since dinner. No grown-up male—with the exception, perhaps, of Mr Anthony Trollope, whom I have heard ladies say has actually described the thing—can picture the mysteries that take place in the drawing-room before the gentlemen come in. Do they tell stories, I wonder, like the folks in the dining-room? Now and then something incidentally crops up which induces me to think they do; but there is no absolute proof. When I was a very little boy, and there chanced to be a dinner-party at home, after having had my half-glass of wine—'up to the cut,' I remember, was the niggardly phrase—it was my invariable custom to leave the dining-room when the ladies did; and well I recollect how my elder brother used playfully to flick my unprotected legs with his dinner-napkin, as I closed the petticoated procession. But memory often retains what is least worth keeping, and loses that which is truly valuable. If I had only known that it would be my future mission to write stories, I should doubtless have not so neglected my opportunities in the drawing-room. But at that time I looked forward to be a merchant engaged in the diamond business, and realising thousands of purses of sequins by traffic with the natives of Bagdad and Bassorah. Indeed, upon these very after-dinner occasions I used to be taken upon somebody's lap, and entertained with anecdotes of that charming profession, the members of which were exposed to no vulgar bankruptcies; but if they escaped from the mighty Roc (which was a bird) and from the loadstone island (which drew all the nails out of their argosies), were certain to live happy ever afterwards with some beautiful princess, who did not scorn to ally herself with trade. Alas! the tongue is withered now that spoke such magic, and the kind hand that fondled my childish curls is dissolved in dust; and it is like enough that all the rest of the gay company is dead except that little boy. No; I remember nothing of it, except that the older ladies, and especially the married ones, used to herd together, and interchange what I took to be secret and important communications; and that the young ones seemed to get after a while a little tired of one another (notwithstanding that they

were particularly civil and affectionate), and turned expectant glances toward the door.

They could not, however, have been more pleased to see the gentlemen than Rose and Letty were upon that evening in Mirk drawing-room to welcome the two brothers. Much as women are praised for their superior tact, it is my humble opinion that they possess less of it than ourselves. Their gentleness, beauty, and general attractiveness enable them, it is true, to render certain rough places tolerably smooth—nay, some almost impregnable passes very practicable; but considering their great advantages, they often signally fail in a piece of social engineering, the difficulties of which almost any man would have managed to evade. They prefer cutting a tunnel through granite to deviating a hairbreadth from the line they have marked out for themselves. How often has one sat on tenter-hooks, listening to a woman who raises a domestic breeze to storm, when anybody but herself (who has yet been married to the man a score of years) can perceive both drum and cone mast-high in her husband's face and manner; nay, when you, the spectator, have marked half-a-dozen openings—only she will charge with her head down in that foolish manner—by which she could have approached her consort's heart in the course of discussion, and got all she wanted, and yet let him keep his temper. When a *Man* happens to have some feminine gifts, tenderness, grace, beauty—like Walter Lisgard, for instance—what power of pleasing, what avoidance of all subjects of displeasure, he almost always exhibits, notwithstanding his masculine selfishness. It is very possible, indeed, that this young dragoon may not have captivated my readers; but that is because it is not possible to convey, by any description, the attributes which make such a man so popular. Men talk of the nameless charm that hangs about some fair one, her unspeakably winning manners, and the grace 'beyond expression' that pervades her being; but the influence of such a charmer is almost entirely confined to the other sex. She cannot compel adoration from her young lady friends: not solely because she is their successful rival, but partly because she does not possess the art of winning them. She has not the tact to conceal her superiority, to conciliate their prejudices, to win their friendship. Now, Walter Lisgard, who was of course adored by women, was almost as popular with men. There were half-a-dozen or so of people—among whom were Ralph Derrick and Arthur Haldane—who had seen him under circumstances of extreme annoyance, and had been disenchanted of the smiling kindly boy. There was Sir Richard too—but there were reasons enough why Walter should not possess his brother's good-will, and having failed to win it, it was the nature of such a man to be embarrassed in his presence. Dislike, nay even want of appreciation, will often paralyse the most agreeable of our fellow-creatures, and make them duller than those who are at all times equally tedious. But if Walter had been in Rose's place, I think he would have managed to get on better than she did in that *tête-à-tête* with her peccant sister-in-law. No woman can conceal her annoyance from its object, if that be a person of her own sex; she can only be desperately civil.

At all events, husband and brother were received by these two young ladies as though they had been their lovers; and then the tea came up, itself a diversion, which they prolonged to an

inordinate limit. Who is so fortunate that he has never been compelled to Tea against Time ! The dinner-hour at the Abbey, however, in consonance with ancient country habits, was a somewhat early one—six o'clock—and there was a considerable amount of evening to be got through. Sir Richard, in these terrible straits, proposed a game at whist ; and the four accordingly sat down at the velvet card-table—scarcely ever used at Mirk—the gentlemen to contend for shilling points, and the ladies for postage-stamps. Mr Charles Lamb has informed us that he is inclined to think that there *may* be such a thing as *sick whist* ; and if that admirable humorist had witnessed this particular rubber, he would have had his suspicions confirmed. Poor Walter thought grimly of his last experience in that way with the *Landrails*, and could not help making an estimate of how many cycles of years it would take him, with average luck, to win back the money lost upon that occasion at the present stakes. Immersed in this calculation, he made a series of infamous blunders, for which Letty, who was, of course, his partner, reproved him with that unsparing severity which this delightful science induces even in an angelic partner: it is at the whist-table that the trodden worm will turn with the most energetic writhings. Sir Richard, on the other hand (who scarcely ever ventured upon any finesse except that of Ace, Queen), was put in the highest spirits, and became as offensively triumphant as his chivalric nature would permit. Rose, poor girl, sincerely bewailed her husband's vanishing shillings, of which she knew he had no superfluity, and would have trumped her partner's best card half-a-dozen times over, had she but dared. Altogether, it was the dreariest of domestic evenings.

The morning that followed was not much better ; and never did mother receive a sincerer welcome from her offspring than did Lady Lisgard upon her return. The love-light danced in her eyes for a little at their genuine enthusiasm, but it soon died out, and they all observed how tired and worn she looked, how much more white and wan than when she had started from home. If Sir Richard had had the opportunity, I almost think he would have now acted upon his brother's suggestion, and spared his mother the sight of Mr Moss Abrams' letter. But it was too late. Letty had herself taken possession of it ; and when the first greetings were over, and all had had their say about the visitor of the day before, she put it into her mother's hand along with the other missives.

“I don't know who your correspondents may be, dear mamma, but I should recommend one of them to apply to that gentleman who promises in the *Times* newspaper to teach everybody a legible hand for four-and-sixpence ; and when he has done that, he might learn a little spelling, such as *A, b, ab; b, e, y, by—Abbey.*”

“I daresay it will wait till I go up stairs,” said my Lady with a faint smile ; and she did not even look at it. Nay, when she had reached her room, and was alone with her maid, although she turned the letter round and round with hurried, anxious fingers, she did not open it even then, but gave it to Mistress Forest, saying pitifully: “I am not sure about the handwriting. Is it his, or no, Mary ?”

“It is not his, madam.”

“Thank Heaven for that !” cried my Lady, break-

ing the vulgar, sprawling seal, and rapidly possessing herself of the contents. ‘More trouble,’ sighed she. ‘And yet, why should I sigh: this is only another reason to add to the budget in yonder desk for what I am about to do.’

‘That is well, dear madam, and bravely said,’ answered the waiting-maid. ‘It is no use to court delay. Sooner or later, the blow must fall ; if not to-day, then—tomorrow. If he does not write, be sure, my Lady, that he will come himself ; we must make up our minds for that. He cannot go to Coveton, and see my father—which is what I feel he intends to do—without discovering all ; and since that must be, the sooner he does so the better. We are now prepared for the worst—for everything, in short, except suspense.’

‘That is true,’ returned my Lady wearily. ‘Heaven help us !’

‘Amen !’ exclaimed Mistress Forest encouragingly ; ‘and I both hope and believe it will.’

#### CHAPTER XXIX.—A JOURNEY ON FOOT.

Some men, when crossed or ‘put out,’ take, like Sir Richard Lisgard, to whistling melodies—surely a very mild and harmless form of irritation. Others rap out a thunder-clap of an oath or two, which leaves their firmament as serene as ever. Nothing, again, can calm the wrath of some folks but pedestrian exercise ; ghost-wise, they take to ‘walking,’ and gradually their angry passions exude. This last was the case with Mr Ralph Derrick, Mariner and Gold-digger. When deeply annoyed, and some exceptional barrier existed to his throwing the weightiest substance that happened to be at hand at the head of his enemy, or burying some lethal weapon in his vitals, Ralph took to walking like the Wandering Jew. With the first stage or two, his thoughts were busy with the insult, real or imaginary, which had been put upon him ; his teeth were set, his fingers clenched, his brows were corrugated ; then he began to swing his loaded stick, not viciously, but after the manner of an Irishman at a fair ; and eventually that calisthenic exercise, combined with the healthy influence of fresh air, restored him to that normal state of devil-may-care, which persons of charity go so far as to term, in folks of the like description, good-humour. Of course, one cannot help pitying this poor fellow, for he is one of those persons who always look much better on paper than in real life, just the reverse of which is the case with the Walter Lisgards ; but as a matter of fact, he is not only a ‘rough customer,’ but a very dangerous and reckless man. Because we have seen him behave towards that graceless captain of dragoons in a very generous and high-flown manner, it is not to be supposed that he was always capable of magnanimous actions. That young gentleman had been his pet, and it had suited his mood to spoil him. A man may not only be agreeable to an individual or two, but an excellent father, or a pattern husband, and yet be a most offensive fellow-creature to you and to me. But it was certainly hard upon Ralph that the only man for whom he entertained a genuine affection, should have turned out such an ungrateful scamp. The treatment he had lately received at that young man's hands, the knavery of Mr Jack Withers, and the more than suspected collusion of his late comrade, Mr Blanquette, united to put him out of humour with the world. His previous

opinions, as imported from Cariboo, before he met with Walter, that everybody was more or less of a scoundrel, had met with the amplest confirmation. He was more determined to take his own way than ever, and let them look to it that crossed him.

Bitter, indeed, had been his thoughts as he had been borne along with that rabble rout on foot from Epsom Downs. Deceived by those whom he had trusted, insulted by him whom he had loved, and robbed of three-fourths of that wealth, to which he now ascribed a greater importance than ever, as the *summum bonum*, and indeed the *only* good thing that was worth gaining, he had but stopped in London a sufficient time to pack up his scanty wardrobe, then started off again on foot once more, as we have seen. Disgusted with the Turf, as with all else he had recently had to do with, he was now more than ever bent upon leading a new life—not, indeed, in a penitential sense (although some are so audacious as to aver that it is a kind of mortification), but, in other words, to marry. Mistress Forest was as fond of him, he thought, and with some justice, as any woman was ever likely to be; and he was resolved not to be balked of her by the machinations of Sir Richard Lissard, or the cajolments of his mother. After the payment of all his bets, he would yet have left a sum that to one in Mary's position would seem considerable; for he could sell *Many Laws*, after his recent performance, for a great deal of money, to the half of which he rather suspected Mr Blanquette would never venture to lay claim. Yes; he would go down to the place where she had told him her father still dwelt, and would dazzle him with such offers as could scarcely fail to induce him to add the weight of his authority to his own proposals; and there being no particular hurry about the matter, and, as I have said, walking being consonant to his feelings when in wrath, Ralph Derrick had taken the road to Coveton on foot.

It was a long distance, and would have involved several days of such travel, under any circumstances, and he did not hurry himself at all. At many a wayside inn, where he stopped to drink, and found the landlord given that way, and to be good company, he stayed for the day and night, and even longer. And often he left the high-road, and took those short-cuts across country which, like 'raw haste,' are generally 'half-sisters to delay.' This was especially the case when he began to draw near the sea. Those who have passed much of their time upon that element (voluntarily), the roar of ocean attracts as the trumpet-blast the *quondam* charger, and mile after mile did Derrick stride along the cliff-top wherever it was practicable, and by the shore, notwithstanding that his indulgence in that fancy doubled his journey. When we are out of humour with our fellow-creatures, the external aspects of nature, even though we be no Poets, have often a special attraction for us; the winds of Spring—since as much has been said of those of Winter—are certainly not so unkind as man's ingratitude, and we bid them blow with a sort of soothing scorn; nor does the blue spring sky bite half so nigh as benefits forgot. It pleased Ralph Derrick to let it do its worst, and rain or shine, he never sought shelter save when he needed drink or rest; and during this last part of his travel, he obtained them as often at some humble farmhouse as at an inn. The simple folks,

who stared at his great beard, and wondered why he did not shew them what goods he had in his knapsack, like any other pedler, pleased him hugely; and when some newly-soaped and carefully-brushed bashful child would steal into his humble dining-chamber—which was the midwife's invariable plan of getting her dues settled, since we cannot charge for things, you know (and especially brandy), without a licence—he would take the little creature upon his knee, and give him, or her, his newest shilling, in addition to what was always a liberal settlement of the account. Perhaps he was practising that *rôle* of *Paterfamilias* which he hoped to be soon called upon to play. At all events, Ralph was by this time in high spirits; and when he was told that Coveton lay not above a dozen miles ahead of him even by the coast-line, he threw his cudgel into the air, and shouted a wild fragment of a diggers' song, to the consternation of his rustic informant.

His way lay now over a great waste of moorland, elastic to the tread, and over which the wind swept almost as unresisted as on the ocean from whence it came. Here and there, it whistled through a bare thorn, but what few trees there were had hidden themselves in sunken hollows, and stood therein huddled together, with only their shivering tops above the surface. Nothing was to be seen inland save 'a level waste of rounded gray,' broken now and again by a church spire or a scattered hamlet; but the seaward view was very fine. From that moorland height, you looked upon two fair islands, spread like a raised map, beneath, with every hut and quarry distinctly plain, and the small white light-house standing out on its little hill like a child's toy upon its pedestal. How picturesque and sequestered they looked: how like two miniature but independent worlds, to either of which a man who had had enough and to spare of the turmoil of life might retire with some fitting mate, and peacefully end his days. Surely, thought Ralph, he had somewhere seen those two same islands before! As he stood at gaze, his thoughts went wandering over archipelagoes of garden-ground in tropic seas; over rocky islets sawn from iron-bound coasts by the jagged waves; and over mounds of sand, which the ocean had thrust back into the jaws of rivers, and suffered man to call them Land, and dwell there. But these were none of those. As he went on more slowly, searching through the long gallery of his mind for the picture which he knew was there, and half bewildered by the shifting scenes, he was startled by a noise like distant thunder. The sky was almost without a cloud, and the sea, although running high, and dashing with pettish screech against the cliffs, was not so rough but that the fishing-smacks, of which there was quite a fleet in motion, carried all sail; moreover, the thunderous sound was not upon the seaward side, but inland. A few score rapid strides in that direction made its source apparent. An enormous hole, like half-a-dozen gravel-pits in one, but deep as a mine, was gaping there; and at the bottom, whither it had tunneled through years of patient unremitting toil, lay the churning sea. It was a gruesome sight to mark the solid earth—just where a peaceful cornfield met the moorland—thus invaded by its insidious foe, whose horrid pean seemed to have something of malicious greed as well as exultation in it, as though it lusts to eat the heart of the round world itself away, after the same manner. 'The Devil's Cauldron!' exclaimed

Ralph excitedly, and then looked round him with a half-shudder, as though he had repeated the statement out of deference to a Great Local Authority, rather than initiated it of his own free-will. Yes, such was the name by which the place was known ; he felt certain of that fact ; but unless in sober seriousness H. S. M. himself had whispered the information, how did he ever come to be aware of it ? He had certainly never been there before, in all his life ; it was impossible, having once seen it, to have forgotten so abnormal as well as tremendous a scene. True, there are pits and holes in many cliffs a few yards from their edge which reach like shafts in a tunnel down to the sea ; but the distance of this place from the shore might be measured by furlongs, and the pit was so large that it almost resembled a land-locked bay. A Cauldron it might well be called, where the black waters were seething and boiling even now, while in storm-time there would be such wild work as no mere witches could raise, but only the Fiend himself, their master.

Did the mad waves, finding themselves thus imprisoned, ever leap up ? Yes : now he remembered all. Thirty years ago, last autumn, he had seen those islands once before from shipboard, and had had them in view for a whole day. The wind, which was dead against the vessel, had kept her off and on that dangerous coast, and eventually risen to storm, and sunk her with all on board save him alone. The last time he had seen that little lighthouse, it had flashed in vain its fiery warning through sheets of blinding foam. The captain had told him, hours before, what sort of shore awaited them, if ever the *North Star* should be driven upon those pitiless cliffs, on which Derrick himself was now standing ; and, in particular, he had mentioned the Devil's Cauldron, which was spouting foam yonder, he said, like Leviathan, a quarter of a mile inland over the standing corn. Ralph lay down at full length upon the thymy moor, and peered over the brink of the abyss with earnest gaze, as though he could fathom its dark depths, and mark what lay beneath them. Then rising, with a sigh, he wandered on, no longer with springy tread, until presently the cliff-top became dotted with white verandaed houses, looking down upon a little bay, that ran up into the land between steep banks, well clothed with trees and shrubs ; whereby he knew that he had come to his journey's end, and that this must needs be Coveton.

#### A WORD FOR SPIDERS.

THERE are few creatures that are looked upon with greater horror, by some people, than spiders. Even a dreadful wasp, or a creature as terrific as an earwig, fails in producing the amount of horror that the proximity of a spider will do. Let the careful housemaid but catch a glimpse of a spider in a room under her charge, and straightway the broom is effectually wielded, and the animal smashed or driven away ; its web of course being broken to bits, and itself banished into outer darkness. Such wholesale, and without-trial punishment is usual, and therefore, it seems, must and ought to be inflicted. 'Spiders are cruel insects,' say the public, 'and catch and eat poor flies.'

Now, in the first place, the spider is not, strictly speaking, an insect ; he grows from a little spider to a large one, and insects never grow ; he should rather, therefore, be termed an animal. The

spiders to which we purpose calling particular attention are the Common Garden Spider (*Epeira diadema*), and the Hunting or Zebra Spider (*Salicetus scenicus*).

About the middle of July, or perhaps earlier, the various shrubs, vine, ivy, &c., will be found covered with a number of small circular webs ; in the centre of each, or in some secure retreat among the leaves, sits the proprietor of the web. He is at this time very small, his body not being much larger than a mustard-seed ; yet in spite of his tender years and apparent inexperience, he is an accomplished workman, and skilled in all the art of web-making. Let us now watch him as he makes his web.

Crawling slowly among the leaves, he at length stops for a few seconds, wriggles his body slightly, touches a leaf with his tail, and then spreading out his legs, drops slowly downwards, suspended by a single line of web. He then descends until he finds a suitable footing, when, having examined his new position, and found it agreeable, he gums down the end of the single line of web, and ascends by this hand-over-hand. This first line, the young spider intends to be one of the main guys of his future web ; it ought, therefore, to be very strong. The spider, therefore, upon ascending, 'pays out' from his web-bag a second line, which he attaches to the first, and thus strengthens it. Having made fast this second guy, he proceeds crossways, travelling sometimes a long distance, and dragging after him his line, until he finds a suitable place to which to attach his second out-line. According to the position that he has selected, so will the spider arrange several or only two or three of these preliminary lines.

Having a foundation upon which to work, the spider next places a series of diagonals, arranged with the accuracy and very much in the position of the spokes of a wheel. These vary in number according to the spider's fancy, but usually consist of from about twenty to thirty, the latter being the commonest average. These 'spokes' of the web are usually gone over two or three times, in order to give them strength, and are bound together at the centre by a complicated network. The spokes are usually about six or eight inches long, thus making the diameter of the web about one foot.

The next proceeding is to complete the network, that is, to join these spokes by cross-bars. To do this, the spider commences at the outer diameter, starts from one of the spokes, to which he attaches a web, by means of the last right hind-leg, turning his body slightly, to allow of the line passing freely out of the web-sack. He then proceeds to the next spoke, attaches his web there ; and so methodically proceeds onwards, until he narrows his circles, and finishes in the centre. The number of circles traced by the spider's web vary according to the length of the spokes ; some webs being formed with only a dozen or so, others possessing thirty or forty. Several webs at present in our garden have over thirty-five circular portions, the exterior being traced round the circumference of a circle, the diameter of which is one foot two inches. Taking the guys into account, as well as the spokes and circular portions, there will be in one web no less than twenty-five yards spread out. When, then, we remember that many of these lines are passed over twice, and during fine weather, that a spider makes a separate web each night, or during early morning, Sundays included, we find that nearly two hundred

yards of web are required by the spider per week, in order to supply itself with food.

A spider never repairs its web; it dislikes patch-work, and makes a new web when the old one has done its duty, for there are two reasons for the wear and tear of a web. First, the insects of large size that are caught in the web destroy it by breaking certain portions, and thus making great holes therein. Secondly, a web to be efficient is covered with a gummy substance by the spider, and this serves to hold the insects that fly against the web, their wings being kept firmly fixed thereby. This gum evaporating to a great extent, an old web is not so secure as is one freshly constructed.

Having completed its web to its satisfaction, the spider usually takes up its position in the centre thereof, but not before it has arranged a ladder of web, by which it can conveniently retire from the centre of the web amongst some leaves or into a quiet nook at a short distance. The spider is now on watch; his eight legs are stretched out, and the claws hold each a spoke: should the slightest vibration take place in any part of his web, he gives a smart jerk to the spokes leading to that part, in order to inquire whether anybody is within, for if an insect of any kind has been caught, this jerk will cause it to buzz or struggle, and the spider at once proceeds to grasp it. When a fly or other creature is made prisoner by the web, the spider runs rapidly towards it, and if it be large, such as a daddy-long-legs, a blow-fly, or a creature of equal size, the spider seizes it with his legs, and inserts his powerful nippers in the body, holding the creature in so iron a grasp that all its struggles are useless. It seems as though the spider produced also some peculiar fluid which tends to quiet or destroy the insects it seizes, for a large fly quickly ceases to struggle after being bitten by the spider, whereas the same insect would move about quite cheerfully long after it had received a pin through its body. The fly having almost ceased to struggle, the spider considers that the next step may be taken. Without entirely quitting its prey, it yet cautiously makes use of its nippers, and separates the portions of the web which adhere to the fly, until its victim is held by only two threads. The spider then slowly twists the fly round and round, as it does so, covering it with a broad network of web, until the fly is wrapped up like a mummy. At this part of the proceeding, the spider usually rests a little while, and employs itself in 'picking its teeth,' using its legs and claws for this purpose. It shortly, however, returns to business, separates first one guy, then the other, in the interim attaching the fly to himself by means of a stout line of web. He then runs to the centre of his web, dragging the fly after him, and either commences his meal there, or retreats to a snug corner among the leaves.

The demand made upon the constitution of the spider is, as may be imagined, very great. Twenty-five yards of web is no trifle for a little creature whose body is about one-fifth of an inch in length. Taking the relative sizes of a man and a spider, and from thence obtaining the proportions, we find that for a spider to make twenty-five yards of web from its body, is equivalent to a man having to make nearly five miles of stout thread from his body by means of secretions. We may, therefore, naturally expect that the appetite of a spider and his eating powers are enormous, to enable him to supply the drain thus made upon him.

In order to test what a spider could do in the

way of eating, we arose about daybreak one morning to supply his fine web with a fly. At first, however, the spider did not come from his retreat, so we peeped among the leaves, and there discovered that an earwig had been caught, and was now being feasted on. The spider left the earwig, rolled up the fly, and at once returned to his 'first course.' This was at 5.30 A.M. in September. At 7 A.M. the earwig had been demolished; and the spider, after resting a little while, and probably enjoying a nap, came down for the fly, which he had finished by 9 A.M. A little after 9, we supplied him with a daddy-long-legs, which was eaten by noon. At one o'clock, a blow-fly was greedily seized, and with an appetite apparently no worse for his previous indulgence, he commenced on the blow-fly. During the day and towards the evening, a great many small green flies, or what are popularly termed midges, had been caught in the web. Of these, we counted one hundred and twenty, all dead, and fast prisoners in the spider's net. Soon after dark, provided with a lantern, we went to examine whether the spider was suffering at all from indigestion, or in any other way from his previous meals; instead, however, of being thus affected, he was employed in rolling up together the various little green midges, which he then took to his retreat, and ate; this process he repeated, carrying up the lots in detachments, until the whole web was eaten, for the web and its contents were bundled up together. A slight rest of about an hour, was followed by a most industrious web-making process, and before daybreak, another web was ready to be used in the same way.

Taking the relative size of the spider and of the creatures it ate, and applying this to a man, it would be somewhat as follows: At daybreak, a small alligator was eaten; at 7 A.M., a lamb; at 9 A.M., a young camelopard; at one o'clock, a sheep; and during the night, one hundred and twenty larks.

This, we believe, would be a very fair allowance for one man during twenty-four hours; and could we find one gifted with such an appetite and such digestion, we can readily comprehend how he might spin five miles of web without killing himself, provided he possessed the necessary machinery.

From what we have remarked with reference to the spider's appetite, the fact of his being a very useful creature in our gardens will be evident; the flies, earwigs, gnats, and small insects that he destroys, being almost beyond computation. During one of the close hot days of September 1865, when the insects were very annoying, and were flying about in great numbers, we observed many of the webs quite crowded with them; so just before sunset we counted one of the webs, and found two hundred and ten insects therein. In several others there were above one hundred. In the garden (which was forty yards long by about eight broad), there were about forty-five webs; so that during the day somewhere between five and six thousand small insects were destroyed by the spiders alone.

When the weather is cold or wet, the spiders do not obtain their food so easily, for the insects then remain in secure retreats, and thus avoid the spiders' webs. At such times, spiders become very watchful and hungry, and are wonderfully on the alert, coming down from their corners like tigers, seizing their prey, and giving it no chance of escape. It is very amusing to see the means

adopted by a spider to escape, when he is taken hold of or threatened. When he concludes that danger is near, he drops suddenly from his web or from the hand, holding on by means of a single line of web ; if the danger seems to have passed, he then ascends 'hand-over-hand' and with great rapidity, in order to regain his former position ; but as he must, by adopting this plan, return to the same spot from which he dropped, he has another card to play on an emergency. First, he drops to a distance of about one or two feet ; he then 'pays out' a thick portion of web in a horizontal direction, which floats away, and is sure to adhere to some branch, twig, leaf, or bit of grass ; he then runs along this bit of web, and thus effects his escape. This, however, is not the remedy in the most desperate cases ; it is only a temporary case that requires such proceedings. When matters are really urgent, a spider breaks the line by which he is held to his web, and drops direct down to the ground, shutting up his legs, and making himself as much as possible like a ball ; he then lies on the ground like a stone, and will not be induced to move under any conditions. This plan of not moving seems to be a popular piece of diplomacy in the spider and spidering-world. A very crafty daddy-long-legs, if thrown into a web, seems immediately to comprehend its danger, and will not move a muscle, for if it did, the owner of the web would instantly attack him, and wind him up like a mummy. A blow-fly, too, is occasionally equally as cautious, and thus prolongs his life a few minutes. This very cunning proceeding is, however, often the cause of a spider himself being sacrificed ; for if in his 'drop' to escape danger he happen to alight in another web, he may try the lying quiet plan, when, if the owner of the web in which he has dropped is on the alert, he is at once wound up in those inexorable folds, from which there seems no escape.

A spider, when disturbed and alarmed, gives out a peculiar smell, very powerful, and much like the scent of the bean-flower. It is possible that this odour may have an effect upon the creatures it seizes, probably producing sleep, for many of the voracious insects seem similarly provided—the ant, for instance, having a strong pungent smell about him, which increases in power when danger threatens. Among the larger animals, there seems to be no creature so formidable for its size as is a spider. Provided with eight legs, at the extremity of each of which are pincers of great power, compared to which a lion or tiger's claws are mere trifles ; with legs, too, of an enormous length, so that it can encircle its prey in its grasp, and thus hold it securely, whilst the long nippers are buried in its body—the spider must seem to the insect-world a demon indeed. Fancy a tiger with eight legs, each twenty feet long, with teeth a foot in length, and capable of binding its struggling victim in a net, and we should indeed find tigers a fearful pest, and tiger-hunting even more dangerous than at present.

During the hot close nights of the summer, spiders may really be made useful assistants in a bedroom. To sleep with the window open, is almost a necessity at such times, but the open window admits numbers of gnats and small insects, which, by their buzzing or bites, disturb the sleeper. If, however, a spider or two have chosen to construct webs before the window, the insects that would otherwise have annoyed us serve for the

spiders' supper. The common garden-spider is not a wanderer either, so he may be trusted in a room, for when he has once selected a corner, and built a web, he invariably keeps to the same locality, and destroys gnats and flies by the score, so that there is no chance of our suffering annoyance from his crawling over us at uncertain hours of the night.

There seems to be a rule throughout all nature, that the creatures which eat the most rapidly and consume the greatest quantity, can remain without food for the longest time. A spider that we obliged to emigrate from a rose-bush to a pane of glass in a north window of our room, refused to build a web for four days ; he then built a very small one, but caught nothing during three days more ; he seemed, however, none the worse for his week's fasting. We then transferred him to a tin box, in which there were holes for ventilation, and covered the top of this with a piece of glass, in order to observe his proceedings. The spider at first could not ascend the slippery sides of the box, so it shortly set to work to gum on little bits of web, so that in two days it could lodge comfortably during the whole night on the side of the box. A fly which was placed inside was soon caught, but did not seem to be eaten with the same relish as when the spider resided in its web, though a week's fasting was certainly long enough to have given an appetite.

It is very rarely that two spiders really have a fair stand-up fight. If by chance two are placed in one web, the weaker or more cowardly instantly retreats, or is captured, and wound up by the stronger. Spiders are decidedly cannibals ; they will breakfast off their brothers and dine off their sisters without any compunctions ; and as regards what they eat, they seem to have no particular preference either for flies, gnats, moths, earwigs, daddy-long-legs, bees, wasps, or other small-fry—all being eaten with the same eagerness.

When a spider has devoured all that is good belonging to a fly, he gets rid of the remainder by flinging it out of his web ; this he accomplishes by the aid of his legs and claws, and he is very careful that it is not deposited in his web. It is very amusing to find a spider meeting and overcoming the difficulties of dragging a large fly among leaves and twigs up to its quiet retreat, the web by which it holds its prey often hitching in the jagged edge of a leaf, or over the extremity of a 'bud'. The patience of the spider under these circumstances is extreme : he will again and again return to the entangled web, nip it in halves, or raise it carefully over its impediments, and at length succeed in dragging the fly into the selected position.

Spiders, when carefully watched, are admirable barometers, indicating when fine weather is coming, or when wet or cold is likely to occur. If a spider commences early in the night to make a fresh web, we may safely count on a fine night and a clear bright morning ; when, however, we find several old webs remaining in the morning, and the spiders disinclined to make fresh nets for their prey, rain or damp may be expected.

It is curious to find, even among creatures apparently so similar as spiders, a marked individuality of character. One spider upon finding a fly cast into his web, will rush upon it at once, seize it, and after rolling it up, will carry it to the centre of the web, and feast on it. Another spider, apparently identical in every way with the former, upon being given a fly under the same conditions, takes alarm,

and retreats rapidly along the guys of his web, as though anxious only to escape some great danger. There is a fly very common in most gardens, called the hoverer-fly. This creature looks rather like a bee at first sight, but has no sting; some spiders, however, always treat it with suspicion, and approach it with the greatest caution, whilst others treat it with no apparent respect, but roll it up with web as though it were merely a common fly.

If a bee or a wasp is caught in a spider's web, a very cautious proceeding is adopted on the part of the spider, which dodges and practises as many arts as a prize-fighter in order to escape the formidable poisoned lance of his adversary.

Next to the garden-spider, the hunting or zebra spider is the most common. This little creature is small, but very powerful, is striped black and white like a zebra, makes no web, but hunts for its prey on sunny walls and palings, stalking and springing on it like a tiger, and carrying off a fly much bigger than itself with apparent ease. These spiders move along a wall in a jerky manner, rushing on two or three inches, then stopping to look round them, again moving forward, and so on. When a fly or other insect is observed—and this spider is wonderfully quick-sighted—the spider approaches with the greatest caution, creeping up to its prey as a cat crawls towards a bird; should the fly move, the spider remains still, and bides its time for a more favourable opportunity to advance. When the spider has reached to within about eight or ten times its own length of the fly, it gums down on to the wall a thread of web, works its legs as does a cat before it springs, and then dashes on to the back of its prey with a bound so rapid as scarcely to be visible. The fly finding itself thus attacked, takes wing at once, but the spider retards its movements, and is held in check by its thread of web, so that the fly falls against the wall, and its captor instantly grasps this foundation, and there holds on, in spite of the struggles of its prisoner. Even before its victim is dead, the spider drags it off into a secure retreat, and immediately commences its feast.

In consequence of the greater amount of activity required, and also from having no web to make, the hunting-spider is not such a great eater as is the garden-spider, and is not therefore so useful as a guardian to our open windows; he is, however, a most interesting creature to observe, for to watch him capture his prey is very much like having a bird's-eye view of a fight between a tiger and a buffalo.

Another description of spider quite different in its habits and appearance may be observed in most places where a right angle is formed by a wall or fence, or near the hinges of doors, or under ivy, anywhere, in fact, where a dark corner can be found. This creature lives in a den, spreads out its net nearly horizontally, and waits for some careless insect to drop into its web: with a rush, the spider bolts out, grasps its prey, and rushes with it in the most demon-like manner again into its den; so rapid is this rush, that unless we keep our eyes on the web, the fly often disappears, we know not whither. The spider itself is black, and seems to dislodge light of any kind. These spiders will always be found in cellars, dark rooms, summer-houses, &c., and are certainly very ill-looking fellows.

Taking spiders in a mass, and looking at the services they perform, we certainly ought to treat

them with greater respect than we do. They destroy the fly that five separate times settled on our nose as we tried to obtain a second nap at five A.M. They roll up and devour those two wretched gnats that kept us awake last night with their dreary pinging buzz, and, after all, closed one of our eyes with their blood-thirsty bites. They gobble up the earwigs that crawl out of the ripe pear just as we are about to take a bite; and they carry off in triumph the daddy-long-legs before he can shake off his wings and grub our lawns. Thus he or she who kills a spider commits an act similar to that of destroying a cat when a house or ship is overrun with rats and mice.

#### ROUNDS WITH A 'VET.'

I LIVE in one of the Midland counties, where the cattle-plague is raging—has raged, I should rather say, as it seems now to be dying out, from the simple reason, that there are but few beasts left to be attacked by it: and going one day last week to my business, which, I may mention, is quite unconnected with agriculture, I met a gentleman skimming along the frozen road in a very light dog-cart, drawn by a beautiful bay. The driver was Mr L—, a veterinary surgeon, heretofore better known by a familiar contraction of his professional title, but now an eminent local authority, referred to deferentially as the 'Government Inspector.' He pulled up at once, the mare amusing herself with cutting a slide on a convenient strip of ice, and then executing a *pas seul* as her master accosted me. A merry-looking man, as busy men often are, who has the supervision of a very large district infected with rinderpest, and is constantly to be seen flying about in all directions.

'Where are you going to-day?' I inquired.

'Rounds, at F—,' he replied; 'an eight-mile drive; it's a lovely morning—will you go with me?'

I declined the offer, but he detected indecision in the tone of my refusal, and unbuttoned the driving-apron, turning it back from the vacant seat. The temptation was great, and I jumped into the dancing vehicle without tearing much of my trousers on the step, or sharpening both legs on the wheel.

'Emmie!' whispered my companion affectionately over the splash-board, and at the sound of her name the pretty mare bounded away. I suffered a slight inconvenience at first from being partially bonneted by the descent at regular intervals of my driver's whip on the top of my hat. I discovered that this was caused by his constantly raising his elbow in salutation as he was recognised and greeted by the people we passed. Sometimes we had to stop at the signal of an upheld finger, to relieve some friend's mind, anxious to know 'how things were going on'; and I thought the inspector's memory was heavily taxed when he was called upon to recollect in a moment how many cows had been lost or saved on all the farms he attended.

We arrived at length in the neighbourhood my companion meant to inspect. It was his first visit, it having been previously under the care (1) of another inspector, who had signally failed in his treatment of the plague; for he had commenced by adopting a ridiculous theory, and ended by becoming hopelessly intoxicated. Thus the district had been intrusted to L—, who, as he had besides

to look after a large one of his own, found himself almost overwhelmed with engagements. He told me, for instance, that on the previous day he arrived at home, after a long day's drive, at 8 o'clock in the evening, and then, changing his horse, had to start upon a round of twenty-five miles, in another direction. On arriving at F—, a little town in a picturesque part of the county, surrounded by dairy-farms, we sought some conductor, who could introduce the inspector to his new sphere of usefulness, and found an excellent one in an obliging policeman, who seemed to be on intimate terms with every one in the neighbourhood. A rural constable does not at all resemble the reserved functionary who guards the London streets, but is a sociable sort of official, who adequately supplies in country places the want of a daily paper; leisurely strolling over an extended beat, he sees and chats with a number of people in the course of the day, and is consequently always 'posted up' in the latest local intelligence. Under his guidance, we drove to a farm which lay a short distance beyond the town. My companion, while skilfully guiding his mare over the difficult road which led to the homestead, learned from the officer the name and circumstances of the farmer to whom we were going, and whom we found standing despondently at his door. I must here remark, that most of the farms in this part of the county are held by men in a humble position of life, and consist almost entirely of pasture-land, on which great numbers of cows are fed and kept for the purposes of the dairy.

'Good-morning, Mr —,' said L— cordially to the farmer: 'sorry to hear you've been so unfortunate. I've just come to look over your little stock—if you'll allow me.'

'Certainly, sir,' he replied; 'but I haven't much left to shew you.'

We went to the cow-houses; the yard, littered and disused, looked inexpressibly dreary and forsaken; while the numerous empty stalls, where five-and-twenty healthy cows had stood but a short time ago, told their own sad tale. Of all his beasts, the farmer had only three remaining—two he shewed us, with a gleam of satisfaction in his worn-looking face, chasing each other in a field some distance away; these had quite recovered: the third was evidently in an advanced stage of the disease; and, at a glance, the inspector saw that its case was a hopeless one: a poor lean animal, it stood with drooping head and quivering limbs—a touching picture of misery.

'You must kill her, Mr —,' said L—.

'Noa, sir; don't say that,' appealed the poor farmer earnestly. 'I've lost 'em all, and I don't know what's to become of us.'

'Now, look here,' argued the inspector persuasively: 'that cow *must* die. If you kill her, you will receive half her value, under the new regulations; if you do *not*, why, you know, as she is in such a state, *I* must, and then you'll get nothing.'

This was to the point; and the farmer gave way, ordered a grave to be dug, and said he would destroy the cow in an hour from that time. It was arranged that the policeman should return to witness the death; and the owner of the animal, having stated its value at £16, L— made a memorandum, assured him that compensation would be paid, and with a few kindly words of condolence, took his leave. Taking up the constable into our vehicle, we drove away to another larger farm, where no less than forty-five cows had died.

The tenant had never sold one from the time of the first appearance of the disease. He was an old man (he had been seriously ill, our conductor told us, from the shock he had experienced), and the savings of a lifetime were gone.

'I've lost my little all,' he said to us, heart-broken.

I could not help fancying that his voice resembled that of poor Robson, when he used to play in pathetic dramas; but there was *real* trouble in this man's quivering tone, and a *real* ruined home at the back of the scene. With a trembling hand, he pointed silently to a field about a quarter of a mile distant, where a huge letter T was described by the arrangement of forty great mounds. In the graves under those mounds lay forty animals, and buried with them the thrift and industry of forty years of the farmer's life. Newspapers give 'graphic accounts,' no doubt, but I had never realised the cattle-plague until then. I looked out over the fields—perhaps somewhat longer than necessary—in order to give the farmer an opportunity of steadyng his voice; and glancing at the Government Inspector, I detected him tilting his hat a little more out of the perpendicular than usual in an uneasy fidgety way. One cow was dying in an isolated shed in the yard. We went to look at her (passing more of the empty stalls that gave so chill an aspect to the place); the poor beast lay prostrate, her flanks heaving, her protuberant bones scarcely covered with skin, and her ribs raised with horrible distinctness above her fallen and almost fleshless sides. She was in a pitiable state, and had lain thus for many days, until she became covered with sores. The former inspector, carrying out some absurd notions of his own, had said that she need not be destroyed; and so the wretched animal had been inhumanly left to a terrible lingering death. Some young farm-labourers standing round were trying to induce her to eat, anxiously watching her, though hope was gone, for she had been the pride of the dairy. My companion, after examining the cow, with an expression of concern on his face that a London physician might have coveted, turned to the farmer and said, as gently as he could: 'I am afraid she must be killed; it is impossible for her to recover.'

The poor man sorrowfully nodded assent.

'Here,' said L—, 'which of you fellows will do it?—Will you?' he inquired of one of the labourers near.

The lad shook his head.

'Noo,' replied he, 'oi conna do *that*,' with a tone meant to convey that he usually was ready for any amount of slaughter, but on this occasion he was not i' the vein.

'Here, will you?' said the inspector, turning to another of them; but he only received the same answer. 'Damn it then,' said the inspector, 'fetch me an axe.' I confess I have never looked upon the expletive 'Damn it' with the proper amount of right-minded horror, and have always, I am ashamed to say, secretly admired the many delicate shades of infliction the pronunciation of it is capable of receiving. On this occasion there was such a world of kindly sympathy expressed in the tone in which it was uttered, that the recording angel might have mistaken the vague curse for a blessing, and never have even *entered* it in his volume. They brought a clumsy, heavy hatchet, and gave it to my friend. He sprang over the rail that fenced in the shed, asking me

to draw the dying cow's head forward to receive the blow. I did so (not feeling *at all* like a butcher), and in another moment the young doctor had eased his patient's sufferings for ever. We fetched a cart-horse, and placed a chain round the dead animal's neck, in order that it might be dragged away to add to the size of the monster T. *There was positively a bare path worn* across the meadow, by the number of bodies drawn down it for burial. The horse, mournfully fulfilling his novel duties, slowly moved off. '*The best milch-cow I ever had!*' the old man sadly said, as his favourite—dead, and oh! so wretched-looking, with strained neck, and glazed eye—passed at his feet. I remembered another funeral oration—one I had learned at school—of a far more grandiloquent character: comparison seemed grotesque, but the ruined farmer's parting eulogium touched me far more nearly than the elaborate speech of one Marcus Antonius had ever been able to do.

It was a very painful scene: the deserted yard, the vacant sheds, the silent dairy, and listless unoccupied herdsmen, composed a saddening picture, which might have been aptly entitled 'Trouble.' Expressing our sorrow for the misfortunes that had befallen him, and mentioning the compensation he would receive for the last animal he had lost (a sum which would scarcely pay the expense of digging that terrible T), we took leave of the poor farmer; but the hospitality of his class struggled through his grief, and he insisted on procuring for us a goblet of home-made wine before our departure. We then visited another farm, and another; all had been attacked by the plague, and all had suffered severely: at all we beheld the wretched desolation this awful murrain had caused. At one alone the tenant had been fortunate; he had died on the day the plague commenced. The farmers received us well, and were ready to listen to and accept any advice my friend offered them as to precautionary measures they should take whereby future infection might be prevented. But all their capital had been invested in cattle, all their cattle had been destroyed, and a very dark future opening before them, they all seemed overwhelmed and paralysed; though, as far as I could observe, they were patient and uncomplaining enough; and this not because they had no blame to lay on fellow-men, for grievous injuries have been in many instances inflicted on them. Tales of atrocity are already hinted at; and in years to come, when the story of the murrain is told in the chimney-corner of homesteads, they will be remembered and related.

It was late when we drove homewards. I was not so much inclined for conversation as when we set out, and my companion's flow of anecdote had somewhat abated. He had not previously seen the phase in the cattle-plague we had then witnessed. The infected farms he had visited in his own district were either held by wealthy amateurs, who, after trying expensive experiments, and losing all their stock, declared with disgust that they would 'give up farming'; or else by men who could turn for consolation to well-filled stackyards, and determine to buy no more cattle until the disease had subsided. But to these poor farmers the *cura bœmæ* was no mere gentlemanly pastime, nor had they 'bursting barns' to comfort them.

Unlike the man who claimed to be an authority on the theory of projectiles, because his leg had been carried away by a cannon-ball, I do not

pretend to have gained any knowledge of the cattle-plague because I have seen its effects, but I have gained a knowledge of the ruin an epidemic may cause; and I would rather not hear any more bad conundrums on the *rinderpest*—please.

#### LAUNCHED IN LONDON.

[*'My son started yesterday to try his fortune in London. Pray for him—pray for him.'*—MS. Letter.]

##### I.

WITH blessed vigil, cross, and sign,  
And crimson splash of holy wine,  
They used, in ages long gone by,  
When faith was strong, and hope was high,  
To let their vessels flowing go  
Into the great sea's welcoming flow.  
The ship, so newly clamped and framed,  
Trimmed, fitted, masted, proved, and named,  
Eager to brave the lurking storm,  
The ravening sands, the cruel reef,  
As if its veins, with lifeblood warm,  
Felt impulses of high resolve,  
And mocked at human woe and grief,  
Daring with colours boldly flying,  
Danger and woe and death defying;  
No white sails set, but folded up,  
Like leaves of a sleeping lily's cup,  
With latent power to open forth,  
Let tempest come from south or north,  
And rushing gladly to the wave,  
The sailor's home, the seaman's grave,  
Reliant on its new-found power,  
To brave it in the darkening hour.

##### II.

But how much more befits the sign,  
The prayer, the cross, the sacred wine,  
The youth who leaves us, scorning fate,  
Hopeful, innocent, elate,  
To face the giant city's throns ;  
The selfish crowd's neglect and wrongs ;  
The cruel scorn, the taunt, the sneer ;  
The lingering hope from year to year ;  
The solitude amid the din,  
Of sordid millions, want and sin ;  
The trampling, struggling for gold ;  
The aspirations manifold ;  
The agony, the pangs untold,  
The life-long purgatory of pain ;  
The love that ne'er returns again  
Unto its nest ; the longing heart  
By time and sorrow rent apart.  
Yes! yes! the mystic cross and sign,  
And baptism of holy wine,  
Are needed now, and fervid prayers,  
To fend our boy from sin and cares ;  
He goes to brave a turbid sea,  
The round world's great epitome.

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